DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 306 971 JC 890 203

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TITLE Faculty Self-Esteem: The 4th Governance Paradigm.
PUB DATE 89
NOTE 16p.; Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges (69th, Washington, DC, March 29-April 1, 1989).
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (120) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Administrator Role; College Environment; *College Faculty; Community Colleges; *Faculty College Relationship; *Faculty Development; Postsecondary Education; *Self Concept; *Teacher Administrator Relationship; Teacher Participation; Two Year Colleges

ABSTRACT

School and college officials should make it clear that they believe that faculty self-esteem is the central variable in student learning. A plan for better learning through better treatment of teachers would include the following steps: (1) announce that the institution intends to create conditions that will enhance the professional self-esteem of its teachers; (2) ask the teachers what needs to be done; (3) keep the teachers informed by publishing lists of issues that come out of group discussions and by preparing an in-house newsletter; (4) make honesty, integrity, consistency, and even-handed treatment the hallmarks of all dealings with faculty; (5) bring teachers into the budget-building process; (6) recognize teachers as the authorities in classroom matters; (7) free teachers as much as possible from the peripheral duties that draw their energies away from teaching; (8) provide faculty with opportunities for professional renewal and growth; and (9) involve teachers in institutional goal setting and the measurement of goal attainment. Having accomplished each step, the school need only review, refine, and repeat them and the staff will get a bonus--an exciting, enjoyable place to work. (AYC)

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FACULTY SELF-ESTEEM:

THE 4TH GOVERNANCE PARADIGM

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Paper presented at the 69th Annual Convention of the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges, Washington, DC, March 29-April 1, 1989.

JC 890 203

FACULTY SELF-ESTEEM:

THE 4TH GOVERNANCE PARADIGM

The American system of education is stuck.

By now we are sick of hearing about the nearly 700,000 individuals who leave our schools every year unable to read or write. Or the staggering illiteracy rate. Or that our brightest students can not successfully compete on an international level. We are embarrassed, contrite, perplexed -- and more-than-a-little-bit defensive about it.

All the more disconcerting is the fact that, for decades, educators have known the solution to much of what is wrong with our schools, yet have failed to apply it. Likewise, local citizens and blue ribbon panels are proclaiming the problems "too complex", implying that remedies will be a long time in coming. Relevant research has been readily available and should be quite familiar to these groups - the research that is the key to unraveling the teaching and learning mess and the unsticking of the system.

The answers can be found in the writings of Maslow, Hersberg, Argyris, more recently, Peters, and scores of others. These writers tell us what we intuitively know to be the truth about motivation - treat people well, and they will perform well. Find out which variables in the environment will improve the well-being and self-esteem of the participants and you have located the keys to causing positive changes in performance. It is that straight forward.

For anyone searching for ways to fix America's educational problems, this paper offers a sure-fire approach. Simply stated, school and college officials should make it clear that they believe faculty self-esteem is the central variable influencing student learning. Ernest Boyer put it this way in a 1987 address to The National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development,

> When this nation...decide(s) to reaffirm, to empower a teacher, and to give a sense of dignity and status, we have in my judgement, found the key to education.

For those who would like to implement a plan for better learning through better treatment of teachers, the steps are found below.

There are three preconditions and one rather pedestrian bias. The bias is this: Education, like all complex enterprises, demands that we take a holostic view. If enhancing faculty self-esteem is the stated goal, then it should be integrated into the many levels that make up an institution. Self-esteem then becomes the vantage point from which all decision-makers and staff view every part of the enterprise, and takes its place along side of the bureaucratic, collegial, and political decision-making or governance paradigms.

The three preconditions are: 1. That teachers already know enough about their subject matter to make their presence in the classroom beyond question. 2. That faculty are anxious to do all they can to facilitate learning. 3. That the decision makers, administrators and boards, are ready to promote a teacher-centered environment.

For convenience, the paradigm has been arranged in a nine-level web. Recall that the problem is a complex one; thus, the web could be far more intricate.

Level One: ANNOUNCE CLEARLY AND UNEQUIVOCALLY THAT THIS INSTITUTION INTENDS TO DO EVERYTHING IN ITS POWER TO CREATE CONDITIONS WHICH WILL ENHANCE THE PROFESSIONAL SELF-ESTEEM OF ITS TEACHERS. Write it down, send it out to all who need to know, and adopt this management stance. The announcement should include the reasons behind the move and include the link to enhanced student learning. One should not assume that the reader will intuitively recognize that tie.

Paradoxically, the single most important factor in determining the degree of learning that takes place in schools is not the students or even the faculty. It is the administration. Everyone who has ever held a job knows this is true. As the "boss" goes, so goes the shop - it is axiomatic. The formal research on the subject has been well known to us for nearly fifty years. In 1963 Blocker and Richardson in a review of the relevant literature of the 1938-1963 period wrote,

> The administrator appears in study after study as the key person with respect to morale. With virtually the same environ-

mental factors operating, high or low morale can be induced depending upon the behavior pattern of the chief administrator.

Level Two: ONCE THE FACULTY KNOW THAT THE ADMINISTRATION IS SERIOUS, ASK THEM WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE. There are many ways to gain teacher input -- here is one that works well for institutions of up to 150 or so teachers:

Have the Dean, Principal, President, or Superintendent (the higher the better) sit down over coffee with groups of 8 or 10 and generate frank, open dialogue. Make it clear that any work-related topic is fair game and take notes -- not names. After a few of these meetings, common themes will emerge which will make the remaining sessions all the more interesting. The agenda should be unstructured but clearly based on the faculty self-esteem issue. The administrator who has the courage to ask for this kind of constructive criticism (and praise) may be surprised at just how much teachers know and how much they care about the institution.

Also surprising will be the mundane nature of teacher's problems -- more supplies, fewer "mickey mouse" duties which take them away from teaching and, above all, the need to be treated with the common courtesy that is afforded a professional. While concerns about salary and fringe benefits may come up, they rarely dominate these gatherings.

In addition to the meetings, the familiar questionnaire might be sent out. Take extra care to give the rationale and make the questions few in number while urging open-ended responses. The type of questions that work best are: What are the five best features of this institution? What are the things that are most in need of correction? What would you do if you were the Dean, Principal, et cetera? The survey approach should not take the place of face-to-face meetings. Nothing beats sitting down and looking someone in the eye when it comes to building relationships.

Level Three: KEEP THE TEACHERS INFORMED. Beyond the obvious personnel and freedom of information issues, there is almost nothing done in education which cannot be shared with those who are in charge of making the system work. Still, it is surprising how uninformed most teachers feel. Knowledge really is power and those who have power over their own environment are the only ones likely to develop high levels of self-esteem. Here are a few "information exchange" vehicles that have proven successful:

1. Start by publishing the lists of issues that came out of the group discussions. Use a modified delphi approach to see if there is general agreement, then pledge to address those issues that emerge.

2. Write or edit an in-house newsletter that takes extra pains to speak to the things that the teachers say are important. Celebrate successes frequently and continue to find ways to reenforce the self-esteem philosophy. Use this to show what the school believes about good management and teaching.

3. Get out into the trenches often. Care must be taken not to be seen as a snoop, but trust will be developed if it is deserved. Much has been written and said about the value of "management by walking around," a concept emphasized by Peters in A Passion for Excellence. Quite honestly, being visible works. It is merely an extension of the face-to-face meetings described above.

4. At every encounter, listen. Also, never miss a chance to report on progress or to remind everyone of the philosophical premises upon which the institution is operating.

Level Four: HONESTY, INTEGRITY, CONSISTENCY, AND EVEN-HANDED TREATMENT MUST BECOME THE HALLMARKS OF ALL DEALINGS. Without this all else is lost. A school that does not operate this way cannot hope to instill such traits in its students. The faculty-centered paradigm is value driven, just as is education itself. The institution that has put the first four levels into place has established a clear picture of its value system and the crucial element of trust has been established. In an environment such as this, the remaining levels become redundant, given, or school specific. Still, the research does show a cluster of variables which faculty claim get in the way of good teaching.

Level Five: BRING TEACHERS INTO THE BUDGET-BUILDING PROCESS. Like knowledge, money equates to power. Too often, schools use the budget as a means of telling teachers what they can not do. If ever there were a clear symbol of the powerlessness of teachers, it lies in their inability to directly influence the budget-building process. Enlightened leaders must come to see that teachers more than anyone else know what is necessary and desirable to have learning take place. Bringing teachers into the budget-building process is

not as risky as it sounds. Leaders need only define the parameters then allow teachers the freedom to request support accordingly. Once the budget is approved, let teachers spend the funds. The size of the individual accounts is not as important as the teachers' perception that they have been treated fairly and professionally. Again, it is a matter of mutual respect and trust.

Level Six: WHEN IT COMES TO CLASSROOM MATTERS, TEACHERS SHOULD BE THE RECOGNIZED AUTHORITIES. As in the case of budgets, teachers know that there are legal and ethical parameters that must be observed -- it is the administration's obligation to see to it that they understand them. Armed with the parameters and a budget that is seen as "the best that the school can do under the circumstances," the secure, self-confident teacher should now be authorized to make all of the important classroom decisions. It is there, in the classroom, that all of the effort expended to enhance teacher self-esteem comes home to roost.

In this vein, the Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy with the Task Force on Teaching as a Profession made this statement in their report, A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century,

> One of the most attractive aspects of professional work is the way professionals are treated in the work place. Professionals are presumed to know what they are doing, and are paid to exercise their judgement. Schools on the other hand operate as if consultants, school district experts, textbook authors, trainers, and distant officials posses more relevant expertise than the teachers in the schools. Bureaucratic management of schools proceeds from the view that teachers lack the talent or motivation to think for themselves. Properly staffed schools can only succeed if they operate on the principle that the essential resource is already inside the school: determined, intelligent, and capable teachers.

Level Seven: DO WHATEVER IS POSSIBLE TO FREE TEACHERS FROM THE PERIPHERAL DUTIES WHICH DRAW THEIR ENERGIES AWAY FROM TEACHING. If schools want students to learn, then they must examine the things that they require of the teachers. Colleges and universities do a decent job on this variable,

while many elementary and secondary schools do poorly. Obviously, the matter of hiring support staff such as paraprofessionals and aides is related to budget. Still, even schools which cannot afford new hires would benefit from sharing the budgetary constraints with their teachers. In doing so, morale and self-esteem would be improved.

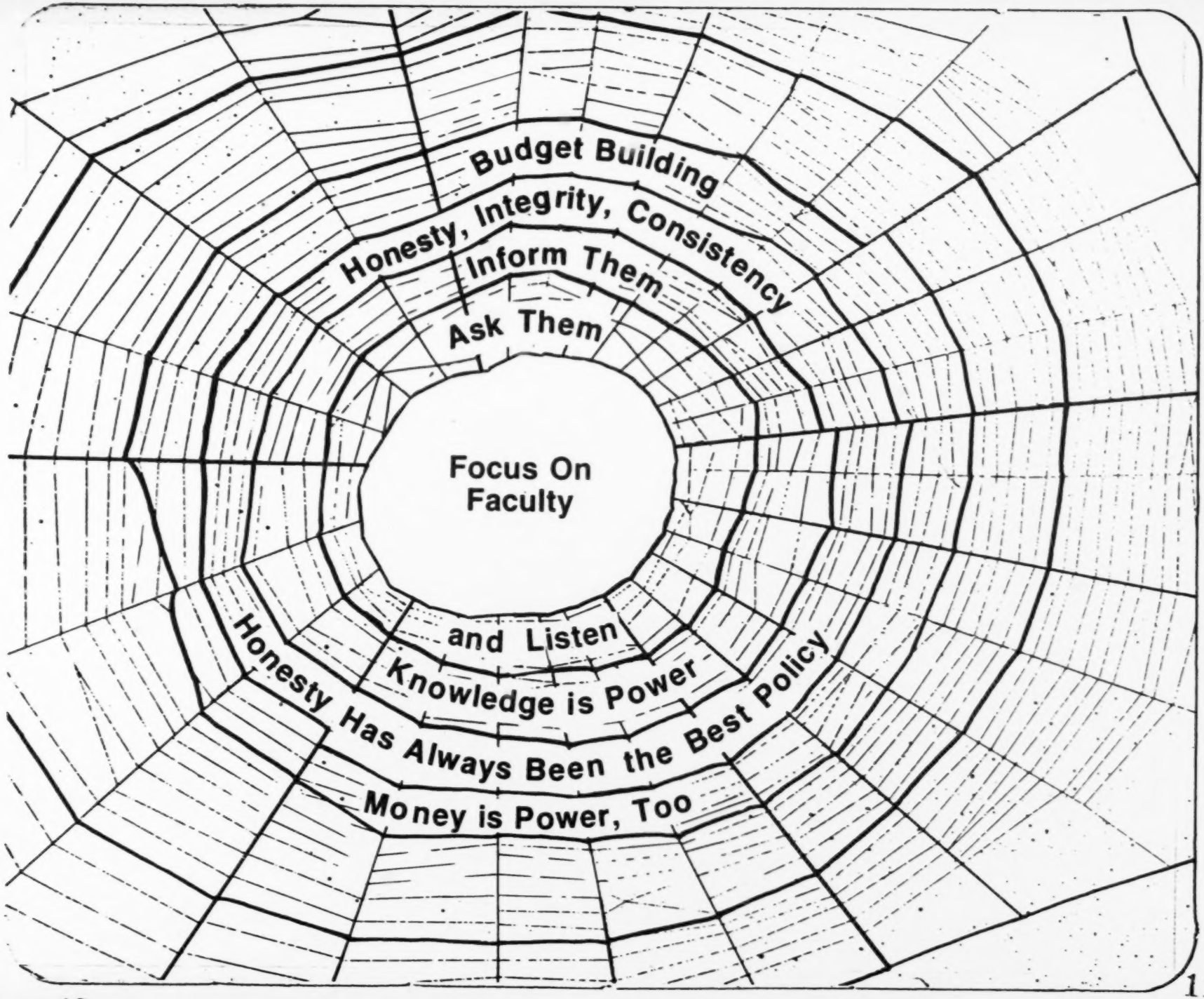
A related exercise involves the examining of the institution's policies and procedures with an eye toward eliminating non-essential or demeaning requirements. The round-table discussions in Level Two probably uncovered many of these. Promise to fix them, then do it.

Level Eight: PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR TEACHER PROFESSIONAL RENEWAL AND GROWTH. According to the Commission on the Future of Community Colleges, over 60% of community college faculty rate the intellectual environment of their institution as "fair" or "poor." A mutually-designed and implemented professional development plan, one which takes institutional, student, and individual faculty needs into account, would go a long way toward improving this situation. While the specific plan will be idiosyncratic to the school, the formula would be a simple one: Teachers who have identified weaknesses should be required to remediate. Those with no glaring shortcomings should be permitted to select their job-related growth activities. Everyone must participate.

Level Nine: INVOLVE TEACHERS IN INSTITUTIONAL GOAL SETTING AND THE MEASUREMENT OF GOAL ATTAINMENT. This step will help to assure the long-term survival of the commitment to improved student learning through enhanced faculty self-esteem. It will also bring a most important and thoughtful group into the planning process.

Level nine weaves its way back through all others and serves to reenforce them. For years institutions have attempted to bring about a wholesale retrofit of their governance process into what appears to be a "faculty-centered" mode by starting here. Oftimes this is motivated by impending reaccreditation visits. While this seems to work well at keeping the site visitation teams off the scent, it probably does little to improve learning. By beginning, as this paradigm does, with an announced commitment to the principles of self-esteem, a holostic philosophy if you will, the institutional goals become easier to develop and their degree of attainment simpler to evaluate.

Having accomplished the nine levels, a school need only review, refine, and repeat them. Granted, each institution will have its unique set of activities aimed at enhancing teacher self-esteem. That is what one would expect. Out of the round table discussions, the surveys, and the management by walking around will emerge a picture of a community that is one-of-a-kind. What the institutions will have in common are improved learning environments, improved teacher and student attitudes, and smoother flowing operations. And, the staff will get a bonus -- an exciting, enjoyable place to work.


Budget Building
Honesty, Integrity, Consistency
Inform Them
Ask Them
Focus On
Faculty
and Listen
Knowledge is Power
Honesty Has Always Been the Best Policy
Money is Power, Too

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